

The Electric Mercury

U.S. Army Medical Command Electronic News Summary, September 2000

For more on these and other important stories, see September 2000 printed issue of The Mercury.
This is a service of the Public Affairs Office, Headquarters MEDCOM.

Expert disputes anthrax illness reports

Media reports that vaccinated troops would become incapacitated after an anthrax attack are not true, DoD experts insist. In two tests – in which monkeys got one third as much vaccine as humans and were exposed to hundreds of times a lethal dose of inhaled anthrax – 18 of 20 monkeys survived and none showed any serious illness or incapacity, says COL Arthur Friedlander of the Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases. Animal tests are the only way to test the vaccine, since inhaled anthrax is far too deadly to be tested on humans and accidental exposures are too rare to be studied.

Medics will transform with Army

Rapid deployment anywhere in the world and casualties distributed over an extensive battlefield – these are some of the challenges Army medics face in supporting the transformed Army that Chief of Staff GEN Eric Shinseki prescribes for the future. Casualties will have to be transported farther to hospitals, so the medics will have to stabilize patients close to the battle lines and prepare them for lengthy evacuation. To achieve this, medical planners aim to move more capability closer to the point of injury.

Patients get help with TRICARE debts

Military health-care beneficiaries now have one source at each medical treatment facility to turn to for help with TRICARE-related debt problems. To spare individuals the stress of debt notices and bad credit ratings, and the burden of resolving claims and negotiating with multiple agencies on their own, the Defense Department is establishing debt collection assistance officers (DCAOs) to research TRICARE claims and provide health-care creditors with documentation explaining disputed situations.

Medics star on show tour

Five Army medics are traveling the United States and Europe for six months this year, entertaining their fellow troops as cast members in the Soldier Show. The five performers are pictured and profiled in full-page coverage.

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Other important stories in the September *Mercury* include:

- The Army is stretching to ensure that it is missioned, structured and resourced for relevance in a changing world, writes MG(P) James B. Peake (since promoted to LTG) in his commander's column. Army Medicine also faces change and must stretch, too, but Peake emphasizes that this challenge is also an opportunity for service and excellence.
- Fourth chapter in *The Mercury* series "Quality Medicine" features an article on the Army Medical Department's participation in Breakthrough Series Collaboratives on intensive-care and labor-and-delivery practices, sponsored by the Institute of Healthcare Improvement; and a second article on how Madigan Army Medical Center gets diabetic patients involved in their own care through a standardized "best practices" approach.
- Army medics and civil-affairs specialists and Air Force special-operations personnel cooperate in MEDCEUR 2000-01 to train a Georgian Army brigade on several combat-care courses. Sidebar describes how an Army veterinarian inspects foods in local markets so that the U.S. participants can spice up rations with fresh food items. (With photos.)
- Army Reserve dentists from New Mexico, Texas and Louisiana bring badly needed dental care to hundreds of residents of Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, S.D., during Exercise Walking Shield 2000. (With several photos.)
- Exercise Golden Medic tests tactical and technical skills of 3,200 Army Reservists, mostly from medical units. The computer-based, multi-day, multi-installation exercise comprises field, command-post and casualty-care elements.
- Desperate defense of Pusan Perimeter, brilliant landing at Inchon, pursuit of North Korean forces and liberation of Seoul are featured in Chapter 3 of *The Mercury*'s series "Medics of the Coldest War," about Army Medicine in the Korean War.
- Ground is broken for third and final phase of AMEDD Museum at Fort Sam Houston. Diagram shows how museum will gain an artifacts-conservation repository, office space and meditations garden with medicinal plants.
- Photo shows Republic of Korea soldiers loading American patient into ambulance during Yoenhao-MEDREG 2000 Joint Medical Exercise in Korea.
- On our commentary page: in a painful confession, a Fort Bragg Army journalist relates how her life and career were damaged by a drunk-driving arrest...and how grateful she is that it wasn't worse, that no one got killed or injured.
- Student letter-writer praises Army for recognizing value of therapeutic horseback riding and thanks *The Mercury* for publishing article on the program in its June issue.

● U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine explains the dissemination, effects, treatment and prevention of the three common hepatitis viruses.